

VZCZCXRO9154
PP RUEHFK RUEHKSO RUEHNAG RUEHNH
DE RUEHKO #3323/01 3400814
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 050814Z DEC 08
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9224
INFO RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/THE WHITE HOUSE WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEAWJA/USDOJ WASHDC PRIORITY
RULSDMK/USDOT WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5//
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHHMHBA/COMPACFLT PEARL HARBOR HI
RHMFIUU/HQ PACAF HICKAM AFB HI//CC/PA//
RHMFIUU/USFJ //J5/JO21//
RUYNAAAC/COMNAVFORJAPAN YOKOSUKA JA
RUAYJAA/CTF 72
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 3631
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 1271
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 5062
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 9267
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 1841
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 6677
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 2674
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2797

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 10 TOKYO 003323

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR E, P, EB, EAP/J, EAP/P, EAP/PD, PA;
WHITE HOUSE/NSC/NEC; JUSTICE FOR STU CHEMTOB IN ANTI-TRUST DIVISION;
TREASURY/OASIA/IMI/JAPAN; DEPT PASS USTR/PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE;
SECDEF FOR JCS-J-5/JAPAN,
DASD/ISA/EAPR/JAPAN; DEPT PASS ELECTRONICALLY TO USDA
FAS/ITP FOR SCHROETER; PACOM HONOLULU FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY ADVISOR;
CINCPAC FLT/PA/ COMNAVFORJAPAN/PA.

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OIIP](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ECON](#) [ELAB](#) [JA](#)

SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/05/08

INDEX:

(1) Scope column: Aso administration has ceased to function;
Election shift going wrong (Tokyo Shimbun)

(2) Liaison meeting of Council of Governors Hosting U.S. Bases and
governments of Japan and U.S. put on show of establishing friendly
relations; Gaps remain over local conditions, perceptions (Ryukyu
Shimpo)

(3) Questioning economic stimulus package (Nikkei)

(4) Japan needs to swiftly deploy alternative weapons (Yomiuri)

(5) Editorial: Gov't must go all out to retain deterrence (Sankei)

(6) Editorial: Door to textbook screening likely to open slightly
(Asahi)

(7) TOP HEADLINES

(8) EDITORIALS

(9) Prime Minister's schedule, December 4, 2008 (Nikkei)

ARTICLES:

(1) Scope column: Aso administration has ceased to function;
Election shift going wrong

TOKYO SHIMBUN (Page 2) (Full)
December 5, 2008

The government of Prime Minister Taro Aso is becoming unstable even before it marks 100 days since its inauguration. In the United States, the term 100 days is called the honeymoon period. The government and ruling parties have ceased to function, chucking the basic principles for compiling a state budget for fiscal 2009 by shelving the fiscal reconstruction policy. The prime minister of course is responsible for the malfunction, but the absence of a coordinator is another main reason for it.

"The running of the government is really being carried out by the cabinet," said a senior ruling coalition member.

The prime minister picked his cabinet lineup and the executives of the Liberal Democratic Party on the assumption that he would dissolve the House of Representatives immediately after taking office and call a snap election. The blame should be centered on the prime minister, who will lead the LDP in the next Lower House election.

LDP Secretary General Hiroyuki Hosoda and Chief Cabinet Secretary Takeo Kawamura were ridiculed as foils for the prime minister and seen as lightweights. Aso even whispered to members who received a cabinet post for the first time: "With this, let's campaign in the election."

Aso's close aides such as Shoichi Nakagawa and Akira Amari, who should have played behind-the-scenes roles, assumed the posts of finance minister and minister for administrative reform which are top-billed cabinet posts. Although Yoshihide Suga was retained as

TOKYO 00003323 002 OF 010

deputy chairman of the LDP Election Strategy Council, there is no Aso close aide in the government. Kawamura, who has not served in any key party post and got a high post in the Prime Minister's Office for the first time, has failed to fulfill his coordinating role. Since Aso has delayed Lower House dissolution, his formation of the "election shift" has gone wrong.

Therefore, the combination of Aso and Kawamura, who are inexperienced in managing the government, has often formulated policy on an ad hoc basis. Discord broke out between the government and the LDP leadership over: (1) whether to cut three percent in public works spending from the previous year, and (2) whether to freeze the policy of curbing natural increases in social security expenses by up to 220 billion yen in compiling a state budget for fiscal 2009.

General Council Chairman Takashi Sasagawa declared in a meeting on Dec. 2: "The council gives its concurrence to an idea of abolishing the ceiling (budgetary request guidelines)," as many committee members called for a review of the spending cut policy.

At a press conference soon after the meeting, the four LDP executives stated that they would propose it.

Policy Research Council Chairman Kosuke Hori got upset about it. It is the tradition that the Policy Research Council makes decisions on party policy ahead of the General Council. At that time, the Policy Research Council was discussing the handling of the ceiling. Hori expressed his reluctance to the idea of proposing it to the prime minister. Therefore, Sasagawa alone had to convey to Aso the proposal of removing the ceiling.

A junior lawmaker said in disgust: "What on earth is the secretary general (coordinator) doing?"

A senior ruling coalition member said: "The cabinet cannot be shuffled," since it is only about two months since the cabinet was launched. The prime minister cannot find any way to make his administration function.

(2) Liaison meeting of Council of Governors Hosting U.S. Bases and governments of Japan and U.S. put on show of establishing friendly relations; Gaps remain over local conditions, perceptions

A tripartite liaison meeting among the governors of 14 U.S. base-hosting prefectures and representatives of the central governments of Japan and the U.S. was held in response to a call by the governors for a direct dialogue with the U.S., following a series of incidents involving U.S. servicemen in Okinawa and Kanagawa. Winding up their first meeting, participants extolled the significance of the meeting with Kanagawa Prefectural Governor Shigefumi Matsuzawa saying, "This is ground-breaking in the history of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty." U.S. Ambassador to Japan Thomas Schieffer noted, "This is an excellent approach." Participants affirmed that friendly relations had been established between the U.S. forces in Japan and local communities.

Okinawa already has a three-party liaison conference consisting of the central government, the prefecture and the U.S. forces in

TOKYO 00003323 003 OF 010

Okinawa. This can be called a local version of the liaison council. However, few meetings have been held recently. A Foreign Ministry source said, "We all know that the three-way liaison meetings have been a failure. We cannot hope for success if we simply file protests with the U.S. military." The source stressed that in order to have the U.S. side come to the negotiating table, there has to be tangible benefit for it to take part in such a meeting.

Ambassador Schieffer during the liaison meeting called for setting up a system designed to boost cooperation between the U.S. military and local communities, instead of holding meetings only after incidents occurred. He underscored, "It is important to obtain the cooperation and understanding of local communities in order to achieve the objectives of USFJ realignment." What he meant is that if communication with local communities goes smoothly, it would become easier to obtain cooperation.

Governor Hirokazu Nakaima requested the U.S. to allow the Japanese side access to U.S. bases in connection with environmental issues. Kanagawa Prefectural Governor Matsuzawa sought implementation of the USFJ realignment without delay.

However, the Okinawa Prefectural Congress has adopted a resolution opposing the construction of facilities replacing Futenma Air Station under the USFJ realignment agreement. The resolution, however, might be conveying to the U.S. a request that does not represent the consensus of Okinawa's residents. The meeting exposed differences in situations in each local government and difficulty in unifying their views.

Winding up the first meeting, one delegate from a certain local government said, "We will naturally ask the Japan-U.S. Joint Committee to reflect on the outcome of the meeting." One government official welcomed the meeting, saying, "It was meaningful that such a meeting was held.

However, one U.S. participant said, "The liaison council is not an official body," indicating a perception gap between the two sides. Timetables for the next meeting and operating procedures have yet to be set, according to the Foreign Ministry. Although the liaison meeting has got underway, it will remain fraught with complex issues.

(3) Questioning economic stimulus package

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Slightly abridged)
December 5, 2008

Political News Section Chief Ryosuke Harada: Implementation, instead of ostensible figures

The economy is deteriorating both at home and abroad at an unprecedentedly fast pace. Few experts would oppose a call for taking additional economic stimulus measures and effective policies quickly. The situation is as serious as that.

More bureaucrats giving up Aso cabinet

To begin with, it is now impossible to resort to demand from foreign countries. The real growth of the economies of Japan, the U.S. and European countries has simultaneously sunk into negative territory for the first time in the postwar period. The situation is totally

TOKYO 00003323 004 OF 010

different from the business slumps in the late 1980, when exports in quantitative terms did not fall, despite the strong yen and the collapse of the asset-inflated bubble economy starting in the late 1990s.

The manufacturing industry, Japan's forte, could become weakened. An executive of a certain leading bank said, "It is a mistake to say that the impact of the financial crisis on Japan is relatively small. Since Japanese companies are operating all over the world, they would suffer the greatest impact." As a matter of fact, business confidence and consumption in Nagoya, where Toyota Motors is located, has rapidly deteriorated.

The job of the government and the Diet at the time of the unprecedented crisis is to analyze what is happening, make out a prescription to find a breakthrough and consider how to find funding resources and raise money out of scarce fiscal resources. However, when it comes to the question of whether there are such arrangements, the answer is regrettably 'no.' The postponement of the submission and enactment of the second supplementary budget bill to the regular Diet session to be convened early in the new year is emblematic.

We have hardly heard that the Council on Economic and Fiscal Policy had even tried to come up with effective economic stimulus measures under the initiative of Prime Minister Taro Aso. Economic growth policy and structural reforms have been put on the shelf. Regarding the reorganization of field agencies of the government, the showcase of the decentralization policy, government agencies are putting up strong opposition to the transfer of operations services to local governments. There is no end to backpedaling discussions, such as a revision to the privatized postal services and tax revenues for road construction. More bureaucrats in Kasumigaseki have given up the Aso cabinet, viewing it as an election-destined provisional administration.

Confusion in the ruling camp over the compilation of the budget has left it in shambles. Generous figures, such as 10 trillion yen or 30 trillion yen for additional economic stimulus packages, are going round. What they are for and where funding resources are to be found are unclear. However long Lower House dissolution is delayed, a general election is bound to take place by next fall. Fear of a devastating defeat is mounting in the form of a call for an increased spending.

The turmoil was presumably triggered by the sharp decline in cabinet support ratings in the Nikkei poll released in its December 1 edition. The support rate dropped to 31 PERCENT, down 17 points from a month earlier. What was more shocking was that the number of respondents who cited Prime Minister Aso as a person appropriate as a prime minister after a general election dropped to 17 PERCENT, the same rate of respondents who recommend Democratic Party of Japan President Ichiro Ozawa.

It has been about two months since the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) chose Aso as prime minister, saying that it is impossible to go into the next general election under then Prime Minister Fukuda. Now that it has become impossible to expect Mr. Aso to show any potential as prime minister, the only way the ruling camp can secure support from voters is adopting additional economic stimulus measures -- they are making such a stop-gap approach.

TOKYO 00003323 005 OF 010

The control tower is isolated at a time when it should find a breakthrough, gathering the wisdom of many, and the Diet remains at

an impasse. What is most important about economic stimulus package is whether effective measures can be taken promptly. Coming up with additional figures as a slogan will make people skeptical about whether the government has the ability to get things done. Voters would give up on the government, if it toys with policies for the sake of the election.

(4) Japan needs to swiftly deploy alternative weapons

YOMIURI (Page 13) (Abridged slightly)
December 4, 2008

Takushoku University Professor Satoshi Morimoto thinks cluster bombs are extremely effective in attacking enemy troops who have landed in Japan. Many experts share his view. The reason is because it is difficult for Japan, a country with a long coastline, to be prepared for enemy landings.

Some in the government wondered if national defense can be possible without cluster munitions. But this May, then Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda decided to ink the Convention on Cluster Munitions in deference to growing criticism at home and abroad.

At present, the Self-Defense Forces possess four types of cluster bombs: (1) vehicle-borne rocket bombs, (2) howitzers; (3) bombs dropped by fighters, and (4) anti-tank rocket bombs dropped by helicopters. The treaty requires the signatories to abolish their cluster munitions in eight years after the treaty goes into force. Scrapping all cluster bombs is projected to cost 20 to 30 billion yen.

It is imperative for Japan to deploy weapons that replace the cluster bombs.

The convention allows the possession of new types of cluster bombs that have an extremely low rate of unexploded bomblets. The government does not intend to introduce such bombs, with a Defense Ministry source saying: "They have small numbers of bomblets, so we cannot expect much from them." Instead, the government plans to introduce laser JDAM GPS-guided bombs that can attack targets with high accuracy. A Defense Ministry source said: "Precision-guided bombs that attack the enemy at certain 'points' cannot substitute for cluster bombs that attack enemies on the 'surface.' We must continue to study alternative weapons."

The United States has not joined the convention.

The convention allows its signatories to carry out a degree of military cooperation and military operations with non-signatories. But according to the Foreign Ministry, the Self-Defense Forces are allowed to act in concert with vessel of U.S. forces in Japan carrying cluster bombs but are not allowed to ask the U.S. military to use cluster munitions.

In the trend of abolishing cluster bombs, how should Japan prepare for contingencies? The country needs to swiftly work things out with the United States.

(08120407st) Back to Top

TOKYO 00003323 006 OF 010

(5) Editorial: Gov't must go all out to retain deterrence

SANKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 5, 2008

A signing ceremony was held in the Norwegian capital of Oslo for the Convention on Cluster Munitions (Oslo Treaty), which bans cluster bombs. The treaty was signed by about 100 countries, including Japan, Britain, Germany, and France.

Cluster munitions contain a large number of smaller submunitions or bomblets that widely scatter in the air. The weapons cause greater damage to enemy troops. However, unexploded bomblets kill or injure

civilians after battles. Everybody would wish to have such weapons eliminated.

However, we must not forget about national security that affects the lives of many people. How will this treaty affect the peace and security of Japan? Is the treaty really effective? These points have been little discussed. We are concerned that an idealistic argument went ahead and ended up with signing.

The Self-Defense Forces currently has four types of cluster munitions, including those dropped from fighter planes. Japan, surrounded by the seas, has long coastlines and many outliers. Given such geographic features, Japan has no other effective means to repel landing enemy troops. Moreover, Japan's neighbors-such as China, Russia, South Korea, and North Korea-and even the United States do not participate in the treaty. The Cold War still remains strong in Northeast Asia, where Japan is the only country that is without effective weapons.

It seems that cluster munitions in the possession of nonsignatories account for more than 70 PERCENT of all cluster bombs in the world. The United States and other nonsignatories have not used antipersonnel landmines in actual fighting since a treaty banning such weapons came into effect. Some therefore argue that cluster bombs also cannot be used. However, there is no guarantee for the effectiveness of prohibiting cluster bombs.

The United States, China, and Russia are moving to regulate cluster munitions within the framework of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The Oslo Treaty, which is even stricter, is now in place. In a way, however, it is difficult to expect effective restrictions.

Japan is mandated to scrap its cluster munitions within eight years after the treaty comes into effect. Scrapping costs total over 20 billion yen. The Oslo Treaty allows its signatories to possess state-of-the-art types that can hardly fail to explode. However, Japan has chosen not to introduce such weapons. It will take more than 10 years to develop and deploy alternative weapons. Will this not leave Japan defenseless?

What concerns us is the Oslo Treaty's possible impact on Japan's alliance with the United States. The Oslo Treaty allows its signatories to engage in military cooperation and operations with nonsignatories. However, Japan is not allowed to ask U.S. Forces Japan to use cluster bombs. We want the government to do all it can so that Japan's deterrence will not be marred.

TOKYO 00003323 007 OF 010

(6) Editorial: Door to textbook screening likely to open slightly

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)
December 5, 2008

The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEXT) has unveiled a reform plan to increase transparency in school textbook screening. Once the screening process is over, how textbooks have been screened will be made public in outline.

The screening system is designed for the government to examine the contents and expressions in nominated school textbooks produced by the private sector and to order to make modifications as necessary.

Under the system, the Textbook Authorization Council made up of experts inspects an opinion paper produced by MEXT textbook examiners who were selected from among scholars and others. Based on its results, publishing companies are asked to make changes to their textbooks.

The whole process is completely kept from public view. Council meetings are held behind closed doors and the contents of an opinion paper and what was discussed by the council are not disclosed. Even the names of textbook examiners and council members are kept secret. The ministry's logic is that discussions must take place in a quiet environment.

The ministry's attempt to open the door slightly follows an episode in which the ministry during the former Abe cabinet ordered some publishers of high school history textbooks to delete descriptions of the Battle of Okinawa that stated the Imperial Japanese Army had forced people in Okinawa to commit mass suicide and later revised it effectively.

The improvement plan calls for the disclosure of the names and subjects of examiners, examiners' opinion papers, contents of discussions in outline, and the names of council members. This seems to be the limit of the ministry which fears that if what is being discussed becomes clear in the process, it might come under pressure from outside.

It is a step forward. People would be able to know, though after the screening, who said what to prompt the council to decide to make modifications. The disclosure of the screening process would make discussions more earnest and cautious. People would be able to use it as a reference in monitoring the next screening process.

That is not enough, however. Even if a situation similar to the mass-suicide description case occurs, people would not be able to know it until after a conclusion is reached. If the opinion paper had been revealed during the screening process, experts on the Battle of Okinawa would have offered their input.

Furthermore, the improvement plan offers no change to the present practice of keeping council meetings behind closed doors and not producing conference minutes. The gap with the Central Education Council, which discusses the teaching guidelines that serve as a guide in compiling school textbooks, is clear.

It makes us uncomfortable that the examiners' views remain inaccessible until after the screening is over. It makes us even more uncomfortable that what is in their opinion paper is to serve

TOKYO 00003323 008 OF 010

as the foundation of subsequent deliberations.

Needless to say, not only history textbooks but also all other school textbooks are vital to the children. How are the contents of the textbooks determined? Are the textbooks free from absurdities and bias? There is every reason for the screening to be placed under close public scrutiny. Greater transparency requires more reforms.

How should the screening be? Is the screening necessary at all? Discussions must be conducted on such fundamental questions, as well.

(7) TOP HEADLINES

Asahi:
2,000 non-permanent workers protest against job cuts

Mainichi:
Welfare minister calls for use of reserve funds for pension program

Yomiuri:
Patent Office to expand trademark protection to sound, moving images

Nikkei:
European central banks cut interest rates simultaneously

Sankei:
First meeting between mid-level Japanese and Chinese officials on anti-earthquake measures

Tokyo Shimbun:
Labor Ministry mulls extending by 60 days unemployed benefits

Akahata:
JCP Chairman Shii urged government to come up with emergency measures for employment and small and mid-sized companies

(8) EDITORIALS

Asahi:

- (1) Textbook screening: Closed door to open a bit
- (2) Road-related taxes: A plan to free up revenues from road-related taxes for general expenditures will not be realized

Mainichi:

- (1) We oppose abolishing the government's share of expenditures for employment insurance
- (2) Will merger of Nippon Oil and Nippon Mining lead to Japanese version of Major?

Yomiuri:

- (1) What came of road tax funds transfer pledge?
- (2) Economic slump affects job market

Nikkei:

- (1) Drastic interest rate cuts cannot wipe away concern
- (2) Merger of Nippon Oil and Nippon Mining with resources and environment in mind

Sankei:

TOKYO 00003323 009 OF 010

- (1) Need for speedy court ruling on murder of former vice minister and his wife
- (2) Ban on cluster bombs: Take all possible measures to maintain deterrence

Tokyo Shimbun:

- (1) Ban on cluster bombs: This trend should be enrooted
- (2) Will merger of two oil companies lead to Japanese version of Major?

Akahata:

- (1) Law to help disabled people become independent should be abolished and new law to protect human rights is necessary

(9) Prime Minister's schedule, December 4, 2008

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 5, 2008

10:08

Met with Education Minister Shionoya and Vice Education Minister Zeniya, followed by Special Advisor Yamaguchi. Then met with NHK Management Committee Chairman Shigetaka Komori.

11:21

Met with Lower House member Kentaro Sonoura and former AJSSE Chairman Kataoka. Sonomura remained. Then met with journalist Soichiro Tawara.

12:18

Met with Japan Pension Corporation Establishment Committee Chairman Okuda. Then met with Internal Affairs Minister Hatoyama and Decentralization Reform Promotion Committee Executive Director Miyawaki.

13:20

Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka.

14:09

Met with Foreign Ministry North American Affairs Bureau Director General Nishimiya, followed by Assistant Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Fukuda and Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry Employment Security Bureau Director General Ota.

14:58

Met with Japanese Trade Union Confederation Chairman Takagi. Welfare Minister Masuzoe, Chief and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretaries Kawamura and Uruma and Fukuda were present.

15:52

Met with National Small- and Medium size Retailers Summit Planning Committee Chairman Toshihiko Kuwajima and others. Shionoya and former Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki were present.

16:16

Met with Cabinet Intelligence Director Mitani, followed by Finance Minister Nakagawa, Vice Finance Minister Sugimoto and Budget Bureau Director General Tango.

17:02

Met with Executive Director Matsuo Yoshida of the National Accounting Education Association (Zenkei), and others. Then met with

TOKYO 00003323 010 OF 010

Chairman Tanigaki of the project team on the reallocation of tax revenues for road construction, and Secretaries General of the LDP and the New Komeito Hori and Yamaguchi, and Kawamura.

18:25

Met with Polish President Kaczynski.

19:36

Joint press conference. Dinner party hosted by the prime minister and his wife.

22:02

Arrived at the private residence at Kamiyama-cho.

SCHIEFFER